

Teacher Certification Regulation Updates

Frequently Asked Questions

v.2 February 2019

Professional Learning

For the professional learning requirement, what types of experiences and coursework will be accepted?

There are a range of professional learning opportunities that are relevant to the requirement, including credit-bearing coursework at institutions of higher education and opportunities traditionally offered within districts. We encourage districts to offer and create options for educators that align to the [RI Professional Learning Standards](#).

Activities that may count towards PLUs must improve, enhance, or increase one of the following:

- Subject matter / content knowledge and skills
- Pedagogical knowledge or pedagogical content knowledge and skills
- Curriculum implementation knowledge and skills
- Educator effectiveness

The district is ultimately responsible for the approval of activities that may count toward PLUs. RIDE recommends that educators talk with district leadership to understand the district priorities and system for approval.

What if my superintendent doesn't approve professional learning that I believe will improve my practice?

Overall district professional development plans must be developed with the relevant stakeholders, giving teachers the opportunity in advance to help shape their school community's vision for meaningful learning. These plans will outline the kinds of offerings that are acceptable, and provide guidance on what teachers should be looking for when selecting opportunities. RIDE is currently working on a strategy to share some examples of professional learning plans, which are an integral part of the PLU process.

We are also in the process of building an Educator Course Network, a platform that will centralize professional learning opportunities and bring together a network of diverse providers that can help to meet the needs of Rhode Island educators.

Who approves my professional learning activities?

The responsibility for approving PLUs lies with the district superintendent or designee. Approval of units should be consistent with the regulations, and once in place, consistent with the district's professional learning plan.

Renewal Requirements

How will the new renewal requirements affect me?

Renewal requirements would apply to any certifications – Initial, Professional, or Advanced – that are up for renewal in 2020 or beyond. The number of professional learning units required will be phased in over time and prorated during the first few years of implementation. Professional and Advanced certificate renewals phase in from 15 to 20 professional learning units over a five-year period. The renewal requirement from an Initial to a Professional certificate would phase in from 20 to 30 units over five years, which emphasizes the importance of induction and mentoring support when a teacher begins a career in the profession.

If I hold a lifetime certificate, am I required to complete Professional Learning Units?

In the case of a lifetime certificate, because that certification does not need to be renewed and our professional learning requirements are explicitly tied to renewal, a teacher would not be subject to these requirements for the lifetime certificate.

I hold a certificate but am not working in a RI public school. Do I need to complete professional learning for renewal of my certificate?

Educators who are not working in a RI public school are not required to submit PLUs as part of renewal of their certificate.

What if I have multiple Initial or Professional certificates?

The professional learning requirement applies to the individual, not the certificate type. So, for example, if a teacher holds two different Initial certifications, they would be required to complete 30 PLUs annually or a total of 90 PLUs to be eligible for renewal or progression of his or her certificates.

Do I need to complete PLUs as part of renewal if I hold a preliminary certificate?

Educators working on preliminary certificates must meet the renewal requirements as stated on their individual status forms. Educators who hold preliminary certificates are not required to complete PLUs as a renewal requirement.

Can I use professional learning from school year 2018-2019 to renew my certification in 2020?

Educators are able to use professional learning activities completed and approved by the LEA during the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years.

What happens if I am unable to meet the PLU renewal requirements?

If, for some reason, an educator has not completed the required number of PLUs required for renewal of their certificate, the educator may apply for a once-in-a-career, nonrenewable special provisional certificate. This certificate is valid for one year and allows the educator to meet the required PLUs for the previous renewal cycle. Upon completion of the PLUs, the educator will then apply for the appropriate Initial or Professional certificate and the issuance date will be from the date of the original expiration date.



Endorsements

How are endorsements different from certifications?

We are reintroducing the idea of endorsements on a certification as a way for teachers to demonstrate additional skills and competencies that do not elevate to the level of a full certification, but are relevant to their practice. Endorsements are of interest to schools and districts looking to hire because they recognize expertise in a particular area. RIDE will not require endorsements for educator assignments, but districts may identify desired endorsements in their job descriptions.

Career and Technical Education Certificate Requirements

At the same time that we promote career pathways for students, why are we lowering the standard for teachers in career and technical education areas?

We are not lowering the standard. We are aligning the standard to industry expectations. For a student to work in mechanical engineering, the industry generally requires a bachelor's degree. For a student to work in carpentry, employment is instead contingent upon industry certifications and experience. These are different career pathways for our students, and they will benefit from being taught by professionals who have followed similar education and career pathways. In addition, all educators in career and technical education must still complete preparation in teaching and teaching pedagogy to ensure that they have the knowledge and skills to meet students' needs.

Will a passing score on the subject matter test (NOCTI) continue to be a requirement for certification?

Individuals who hold an advanced state-issued license or advanced industry certificate are not required to complete the subject matter testing requirement (NOCTI). However, if work experience or completion of degree is more than 10 years prior to the date of the application, the candidate is required to take and pass the NOCTI test.

Registered School Nurse Certificate

Why is RIDE introducing a second school nurse certificate, and will those individuals be prepared to work in schools?

To be consistent with the certification requirements for all school-based clinicians, including social workers, speech pathologists, and non-certified staff such as physical and occupational therapists, school nurses whose scope of practice is limited to nursing should require only a nursing degree for certification. This new certificate will be available beginning June 1, 2019.

Registered School Nurses cannot work as a teacher of record, unlike School Nurse Teachers, who have the ability to take on a teaching load. In order to address concerns about the level of preparation for working specifically with students, the regulation also includes language that ties the ongoing professional learning requirement for Registered School Nurses during the period of initial certification to opportunities that will allow them to demonstrate school-based competencies.



Hiring and Assignment Flexibility

Why is there new flexibilities in teacher assignments, and what safeguards are in place to ensure that districts do not use this flexibility to avoid filling positions?

Teacher vacancies or restricted course offerings are not in the best interest of students. New regulations allow that, beginning June 1, 2019, a certified teacher may be employed for a maximum of 20 percent of time in a teacher certificate area and/or at a grade level for which the educator does not hold a certificate. However, this flexibility requires a demonstration of competency and mutual agreement before a teacher can be assigned out of the certification area, ensuring that teachers are not forced into an assignment without demonstrating that they are qualified to do so. Moreover, districts must notify the union and submit waiver requests to RIDE in order to take advantage of this flexibility.

Interstate Flexibility with Connecticut and Massachusetts

If I hold a valid Massachusetts special education certificate, can I now apply for a R.I. special education certificate without holding a general education certificate?

Beginning June 1, 2019, candidates who hold a valid Massachusetts or Connecticut out-of-state certificate may apply for a “like” certificate in Rhode Island. Candidates are not required to take and pass Rhode Island tests. However, candidates will be required to hold the appropriate Rhode Island independent certificate(s) when applying for a Rhode Island Special Education, English as a Second Language, Bilingual Dual Language, Mathematics Specialist Consultant or Reading Specialist Consultant certificate.

Bilingual Dual Language Requirements

If I hold a certificate in Bilingual and Dual Language Education, may I teach English to Speakers of Other Languages?

Beginning on June 1, 2019, educators who hold a valid Rhode Island Bilingual Dual Language certificate are eligible to apply for a certificate in English to Speakers of Other Languages in the same grade level. Educators will also need to provide evidence of English proficiency and completion of coursework in First and Second Language Acquisition, English Linguistics and Curriculum, and Assessment and Methods for English Learners.

I hold an English to Speakers of Other Languages certificate, and want to teach bilingual dual language – English. Am I required to complete an approved program in BDL?

Beginning on June 1, 2019, educators who hold a certificate to teach English to Speakers of Other Languages may teach in a bilingual dual language – English classroom. However, if the teacher has taught in a BDL-English classroom for less than two years, the educator is required to complete professional learning requirements in Foundations of Dual Language Programming and Implementation of Dual Language Programming as part of renewal requirements.



Substitutes

What are the requirements to be a day-to-day substitute?

A day-to-day substitute teacher is an individual who is employed on a temporary basis for fewer than 45 consecutive days in the same assignment. A day-to-day substitute must hold a bachelor's degree or higher, hold an associates' degree, or have completed a minimum of two years college as part of a four-year degree track.

What are the requirements to be a long-term substitute?

A long-term substitute teacher is an individual who is employed on a temporary basis, for more than 45 consecutive days in the same assignment. A long-term substitute teacher must hold the appropriate certificate for the long-term assignment.

One-Year Residency or Equivalent

In the one-year practical residency, how much clinical time is required?

The proposed change essentially increases clinical experience from 12 weeks to 24 weeks, or equivalent, consecutive or distributed over time, which will allow a teacher candidate to work more deeply with a class and experience school operations over the course a school year. A longer residency creates the conditions by which a student teacher is a more thoughtfully integrated and valued member of a classroom team. We know that we have a preparation gap, and more high quality hands-on learning and practical experience is necessary for teacher candidates to be prepared for day one of teaching.

Who pays for the one-year residency – the teacher, the host district, or the teacher prep program?

Preparation programs have until 2022 to transition to the residency model. The transition time presents a unique opportunity for preparation programs, district and charter school partners, and other organizations to co-create sustainable residency models that meet the mutual needs of all involved. To support preparation programs, RIDE will consult with providers throughout the planning process.

Misconduct Reporting

Why does RIDE need to collect reports of misconduct?

Currently, we receive inconsistent reports of alleged misconduct by educators. Issues often only come to our attention if they receive coverage in the media. In order to take a responsible, timely, and thorough approach, and to ensure that we protect the safety and best interests of students, it is important that we collect all relevant information about possible professional misconduct when the information becomes available. The mandatory reporting largely covers the types of conduct that are addressed in questions on the certification application – in other words, information we already collect. Timely reports from administrators will allow us to monitor cases and, where necessary, investigate allegations regarding professional fitness while providing educators with their due process rights. These reports will be maintained separately from an educator's certification file, and are not considered public records.



Do schools have a responsibility to report educator misconduct to RIDE?

The administration of a local education agency must report to RIDE any certified educator who (1) has been provided with notice of intent to dismiss, suspend or place on leave for misconduct; (2) has been arrested, indicted or convicted of a crime (misdemeanor or felony); (3) is the subject of allegations of sexual or romantic activity with a child or student; (4) is the subject of allegations that he or she has caused physical injury to a child or student due to negligence or malice; (5) is the subject of a report filed with the Child Abuse and Neglect Tracking System (CANTS) at the RI Department of Children, Youth and Families; (6) has resigned, retired, or otherwise separated from employment with the agency after it became aware of an allegation that the educator engaged in misconduct; or (7) has been dismissed for performance-based or fitness related reasons.

All reports must be filed with RIDE's Office of Educator Excellence and Certification Services within 15 days of discovery of the reason requiring the filing of the report.

For More Information

See the [certification page](#) of the RIDE website for additional resources, including the full set of regulations promulgated on December 4, a link to YouTube videos explaining the changes, and a PowerPoint presentation.

If you have specific questions about the new certification regulations, please e-mail EQAC@ride.ri.gov.